

THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

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ac'd 2 Oct.  
OLC #78-5365/A

CONFIDENTIAL--XGDS (2)

September 29, 1978

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MEMORANDUM FOR:

THE SECRETARY OF STATE  
THE SECRETARY OF DEFENSE  
THE ATTORNEY GENERAL  
THE DIRECTOR, OFFICE OF MANAGEMENT  
AND BUDGET  
DIRECTOR, ARMS CONTROL AND  
DISARMAMENT AGENCY  
CHAIRMAN, JOINT CHIEFS OF STAFF  
DIRECTOR OF CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE  
ADMINISTRATOR, NATIONAL AERONAUTICS  
AND SPACE ADMINISTRATION  
DIRECTOR, OFFICE OF SCIENCE AND  
TECHNOLOGY POLICY

SUBJECT: Guidance on Public Queries Related to  
Declassification of the "Fact of"  
Photoreconnaissance Satellites

The attached reflects the Administration policy regarding public queries to be observed by all Departments and Agencies commencing October 2, 1978. All public queries are to be referred to the Office of the Secretary of Defense/Public Affairs at this time for response.

  
Zbigniew Brzezinski

Enclosure  
Press Guidance

MORI/CDE

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NSC review(s) completed.

CLASSIFIED BY Zbigniew Brzezinski  
EXEMPT FROM GENERAL DECLASSIFICATION  
SCHEDULE OF EXECUTIVE ORDER 11652  
EXEMPTION CATEGORY 5B(2)  
AUTOMATICALLY DECLASSIFIED ON 2 Oct 78

Press Guidance on Questions Related to President's Statement  
on U.S. Satellite Photoreconnaissance

Comments shall not go beyond the President's direction to acknowledge that the U.S. conducts satellite photoreconnaissance including acknowledgement that photoreconnaissance is one of the NTMS used to verify compliance with SALT and other arms control agreements. In particular, spokesmen are not to comment on any questions relating to: (1) the capabilities of these systems; (2) their operation; (3) comparison to other U.S. or foreign reconnaissance systems; (4) uses of photoreconnaissance satellites other than the "generic" fact and/or support of arms control agreements; (5) other types of classified satellites; (6) specific form and dissemination of information obtained by photosatellites; (7) uses of such information other than for "national security requirements" and/or verification of arms control agreements; (8) any other aspect of overhead reconnaissance.

To foster uniformity and best protect security, the only office to respond to inquiries from the public at this time concerning "fact of" and "facts about" photoreconnaissance activities of the U.S. will be the Office of the Secretary of Defense. All queries will be referred to OSD/PA.

Questions and authorized answers are attached. Unless a question can be answered by reference to the President's statement, this guidance, or the attached Q's and A's, OSD spokesmen shall clear all other responses to queries with the National Security Council.

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QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

- Q. How good is the quality of the pictures our satellites take?
- A. Very good. I cannot go into specific detail regarding the capabilities of these systems.
- Q. How often do we photograph a given area?
- A. Photoreconnaissance coverage is contingent on national security requirements and requirements to verify compliance with arms control agreements. I cannot discuss the specific operational characteristics of our photoreconnaissance systems.
- Q. What do we photograph from satellites?
- A. We use photoreconnaissance satellites to monitor certain activities that are relevant to compliance with arms control agreements and other national security requirements.
- Q. Do we take satellite photographs of other countries besides the Soviet Union?
- A. We use photoreconnaissance satellites to monitor certain activities that are relevant to compliance with arms control agreements and other national security requirements.
- Q. Do we ever photograph the U.S. from space?
- A. Yes. Periodically, we operate these systems over the U.S. in a manner that preserves and respects established concepts of privacy and civil liberties.
- Q. Who operates the satellites we use to verify arms control agreements?
- A. Those satellites are operated by the Department of Defense at the direction of the President and the National Security Council. I cannot comment on details of operational control.

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Q. Who sees the results?

A. The results of satellite photoreconnaissance are available to appropriate analysts and policymakers in the Executive and Legislative Branches.

Q. Have we ever shown photographs taken by these satellites to the Soviets?

A. No.

Q. Do we show these satellite photographs to our Allies?

A. We share information with our Allies.

Q. Does the Soviet Union also use satellite photography?

A. Yes.

Q. How can we be sure that the Soviets won't destroy our satellites?

A. The SALT ONE agreements and the draft SALT TWO treaty specifically prohibit Soviet interference with U.S. national technical means of verification which include photoreconnaissance satellites. In addition, we are currently engaged in discussions with the Soviets aimed at limiting anti-satellite capabilities. The White House statement on space policy issued last June reaffirms that an attack on a U.S. satellite would clearly be a hostile act.

Q. Is it legal to take pictures from outer space?

A. Yes, the use of photoreconnaissance satellites is consistent with the Outer Space Treaty of 1977 and is not precluded by any principle of international law. The SALT ONE agreements specifically provide that national technical means will be used for verification of compliance with the agreements. The draft SALT TWO agreement nearing completion also refers to the use of such means of verification.

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- Q. Do we use photographic satellites to spy on other countries?
- A. Photoreconnaissance satellites help us to verify compliance with the terms of arms control agreements.
- Q. Does the phrase "national technical means" refer to other devices besides photoreconnaissance satellites?
- A. Yes. Verification of different arms control agreements necessarily involves various types of technology. For instance, a seismic detection system would be the principal means of verifying compliance with agreements that limit underground nuclear testing.
- Q. Is the use of photographic satellites to verify SALT agreements something new? If you were reluctant to talk about those satellites before, why are you doing so now?
- A. The President's explicit reference is the result of a number of considerations. First, it is related to a reassessment of our security classification procedures, in order to make as much information available as possible without jeopardizing national security. Second, it is part of a general review of our national space program. By referring to our use of photoreconnaissance satellites, we want to make clear to the public that verification of SALT agreements is based on our own technical capabilities and does not depend on Soviet good faith or assurances.
- Q. I understand that the President decided last spring that the fact that the U.S. conducts satellite photoreconnaissance should remain classified. Is that true? If so, why did the President change his mind?
- A. Many aspects of our space policy have been under continuing review since the White House announcement of this policy made last June. As I said before, one factor that led to the President's statement was our desire to promote public understanding of our ability to verify a new SALT agreement and arms control agreements generally.
- Q. How is the President's statement related to the Kampiles incident?

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- A. The Kampiles case is presently in litigation and therefore any comments relating to the case are inappropriate.
- Q. Will the reported loss of a manual describing one of our satellites damage our ability to conduct photo-reconnaissance from space?
- A. The Kampiles case is presently in litigation and therefore any comments relating to the case are inappropriate.
- Q. Since the Soviets reportedly know how good the capabilities of our photographic satellites are, why don't you release some sample pictures so that the American public can know too?
- A. For a number of reasons I must emphasize that both the photographs and analyses based on them remain classified however are available to the President, his senior advisers, and to the Congress.

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EXECUTIVE SECRETARIAT (O/DCI) *OC*

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